

# Musalenko

\* and The Great Book





## **I. What do I feel like doing?**

Musalenko woke up at home and a wide, content smile lit up his face. He was thinking about the new friendships he had found, the good deeds, and how good it felt to be helping others. He remembered the rescued holidays in Japan, Egypt, Macedonia, Cuba, Nigeria, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, and Sweden. His last adventure with Johnny the Seagul was not simply great, it was downright gigantic.

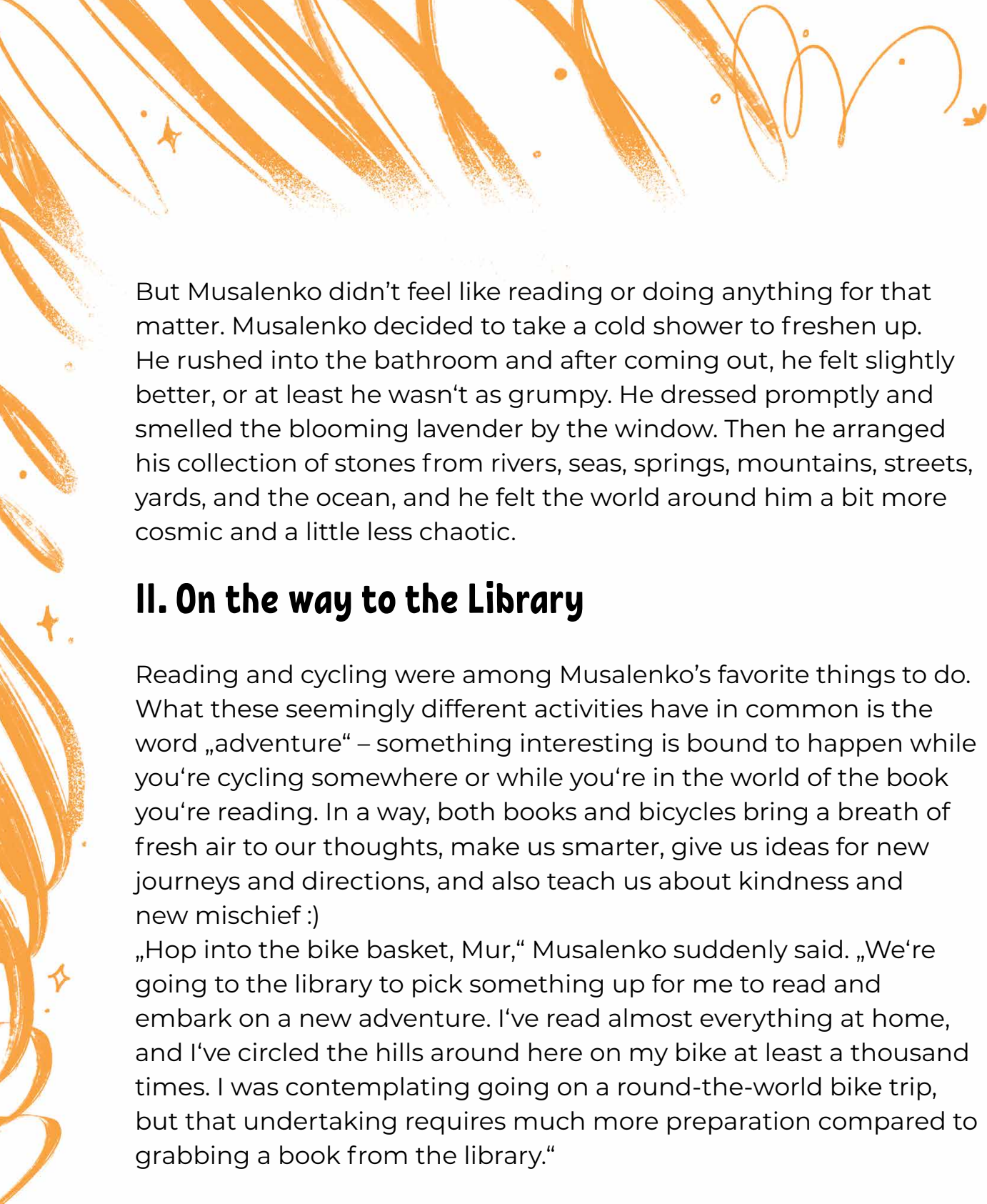
A couple of months had passed since then and Musalenko kept in touch by phone and mail regularly with his friends from all over the world. Sometimes they would even send each other real paper postcards by real mail. Each of them kept their cards in a photo album containing photos printed on paper.

Lately, in addition to friends and adventures, Musalenko took immense pleasure in waking up early, while it was still dark, and greeting the sunrise. He would watch the fiery orb of the sun. As it was rising behind the hill, he would ponder life on Earth, which existed thanks to its warmth and light.

It was on a day like this that Musalenko got out of bed, hugged Mur, washed his face, brushed his teeth, and lazily prepared breakfast for both of them. As you know, Mur was not an ordinary pet. Musalenko wasn't exactly sure what he wanted to do that day and he felt kind of odd – could it be that Saturn was in a hole or that the Moon had started to revolve around Mars instead of the Earth (as it usually did), or... he was feeling a bit off for no apparent reason. He decided to do some reading and took a long, hard look at the large bookshelves he had at home. He opened Karlsson-on-the-Roof, but no. Then Emil of Lönneberga, followed by a comic book and a special edition of One Thousand and One Nights with turquoise covers adorned with golden stars ...








But Musalenko didn't feel like reading or doing anything for that matter. Musalenko decided to take a cold shower to freshen up. He rushed into the bathroom and after coming out, he felt slightly better, or at least he wasn't as grumpy. He dressed promptly and smelled the blooming lavender by the window. Then he arranged his collection of stones from rivers, seas, springs, mountains, streets, yards, and the ocean, and he felt the world around him a bit more cosmic and a little less chaotic.

## **II. On the way to the Library**

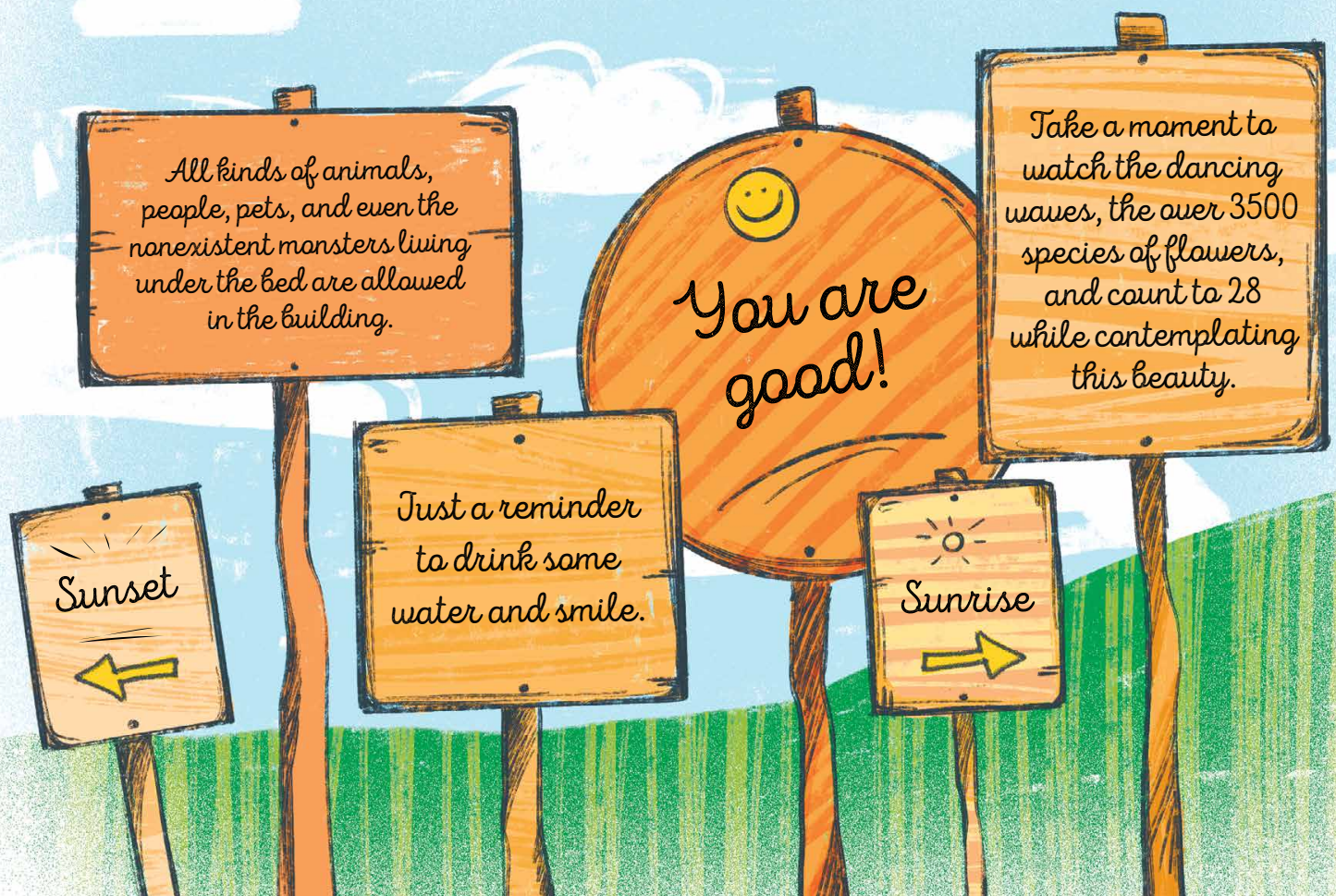
Reading and cycling were among Musalenko's favorite things to do. What these seemingly different activities have in common is the word „adventure“ – something interesting is bound to happen while you're cycling somewhere or while you're in the world of the book you're reading. In a way, both books and bicycles bring a breath of fresh air to our thoughts, make us smarter, give us ideas for new journeys and directions, and also teach us about kindness and new mischief :)

„Hop into the bike basket, Mur,“ Musalenko suddenly said. „We're going to the library to pick something up for me to read and embark on a new adventure. I've read almost everything at home, and I've circled the hills around here on my bike at least a thousand times. I was contemplating going on a round-the-world bike trip, but that undertaking requires much more preparation compared to grabbing a book from the library.“



Musalenko followed his well-known route – first, he stopped at the traffic light that never worked. He looked both ways and then carefully crossed the road having made sure that no cars, trucks, school buses, or the little donkey named Sunflower, which was always in a great hurry, were approaching from either direction. On the other side of the street, right on the ocean shore, was the Library – the most beautiful building in Musalenko's country. It was entirely made of glass, with a huge sun painted on its façade, and a vast meadow of flowers in front of it.

Musalenko parked his bike at the bike rack next to the enormous white staircase, cuddled Mur, and headed towards the entrance. Along the way, there were beautiful arrow signs that Musalenko knew by heart, but loved rereading every time he came here:





“Hello, Musalenko!” greeted him the librarian.

“Hello!” Musalenko responded cheerfully. “I want to read something, but I don’t know what, and I want to travel, but I don’t know where. All I know is who I want to be with - Mur, of course. Maybe I’m looking for The Coolest Book with the Coolest Adventures”, Musalenko tried to explain excitedly. „And my favorite thing to do is meet new friends... When we unite our superpowers and become bolder in our dreams, bigger in our hearts, and even better in our deeds :).“

The librarian squinted her eyes mysteriously and headed towards one of the many shelves around. There were various labels with numbers, letters, and sometimes both. She took out a card and went somewhere. After some time, she returned and discreetly went through a hidden door in the corner behind the reception desk. After a little while, the librarian came back holding a small dusty box from which she pulled out a foxed sheet of paper with an inscription in an unintelligible language:


„Perhaps you’re lucky, Musalenko. Follow me, both of you!“ the lady said cheerfully and started down a long, well-lit corridor. There was a tall door at its end, and behind it, a set of stairs that led to the top of the Library’s glass tower. What was happening with the heroes of our story as they were ascending?

First: Musalenko could feel the sun rays, the breeze... and thought to himself, „Wind really makes the best fan.“

Second: Mur thought, „It’s so warm... But if it wasn’t warm, it would be cold. I should visit a pet groomer to trim my fur! And I’ve always wanted to have my fur trimmed in the shape of a lightning bolt. Can they do that for me?“

Third: The lady from the Library was simultaneously thinking about two things: „Life with a morning cup of tea is beautiful,“ and „Did I remember to turn off the iron at home?“





No one knew how long it took them to climb to the top of the tower, and no one wanted to find out. When they arrived, breathless, at the end of the staircase, they saw a glass door with a sign that read: „Each person is a separate universe.“

The lady opened the secret door with a secret key, and everyone entered the sunny room at the top of the sunny tower. The room was empty, a sun had been drawn on its floor, and in the center of it stood a sunflower-shaped table with a beautiful book on it.

„Musalenko, this is the Great Book,“ said the librarian. „It contains information about everything you want to know. Anyone who reads it learns many new things and at the same time adds to it everything they have learned themselves. The book has no beginning and no end, and the best part is that a person remains connected to it even after reading it. Any new knowledge acquired is recorded in the book. The book itself is good and is used for doing good. Think of it as a huge living Encyclopedia, gathering everything learned by all beings from all worlds – even the jokes :). And, if you see for example a little bird hit a large clean window and fall stunned to the ground, you will know what to do because someone else has already managed to help one in the same situation. And what you should do is give water to the bird and leave it alone to recover, far away from Mur or any other cat :).“

Mur was perhaps slightly offended for getting compared to other cats - he was quite special, after all, and didn't chase mice or birds all day. All animals were his friends... But upon reflection, he agreed with the lady, because it's good to know that cats do these things after all.

„And so,“ continued the librarian, „the book is yours. I will put it down on your library card, and don't forget that the return date is, as usual, one month :).“








# The Great Book





The first thing Musalenko liked to do any time he got a new book, was to open it and inhale the aroma of its pages. He took the Great Book in his hands. There was a picture of a big bright sun on its cover, just like the one painted on the Library walls all around him. Musalenko opened it to a random page, and in an instant, countless rays of sunshine surrounded him. Musalenko and Mur, blinded by the light, at first squinted their eyes, and when they opened them, they found themselves in a strange place that they hadn't seen before. The first thing they noticed was the sky, sprinkled with countless stars and planets.

### **III. Welcome to Space!**

A round ball resembling a planet greeted them cheerfully.

„Hello, hello! I am Saturn and I will be your tour guide in the Outer Space section of the Great Book,” said the planet.

„What is a tour guide?” asked Mur. „Sounds like a water pipe to me.”

„That's the person who guides you when you go to an unfamiliar place or a museum, telling you about various landmarks, their history, different facts, or legends,” Musalenko replied.

„And what is Outer Space?” Mur continued.

„Outer Space,” replied Saturn, „and everything beyond planet Earth, where you live, is a place we know a lot about, but there is so much more that we still don't know. In Space, there are countless stars shining at night, and countless planets orbiting around those stars. For example, the Sun is a star – it provides the Earth with light and warmth, and thanks to it, there is life on this planet.”

„Furthermore, ” added Musalenko, „I have read somewhere that the world we can see around us is not the entire infinite Space, but only a small part of it that captures our attention.





It's as if every human mind creates its own personal cosmos that isn't about planets, but about the way we think, learn, go to work, hop on one leg, smile, play... and everything else a person does." Mur and Saturn looked at Musalenko, both thinking the same thing: „Musalenko has apparently either become a philosopher or has spent too much time in the sun..."

„Alright, alright... What I mean is," continued Musalenko, „let's try to enjoy the nature around us, read, and be smart. That way, our personal cosmos will be good; we'll share it with our loved ones and be kind to the people around us."

„Not very scientific, but well said, Musalenko," said Saturn. „Perhaps the wisdom of the Great Book's big family has something to do with it? :) Who knows! And now, allow me to continue my story. Look around – there are eight planets – nine if you count Pluto - orbiting the Sun.


Together they are called the Solar System. The first four we call terrestrial planets because they are made of rocks and metals... quite like planet Earth. Let me tell you a bit more about them first, and then we will take a look at Pluto. Scientists have different opinions about whether Pluto should be considered an actual planet or not.

**Mercury** is the smallest planet in the Solar System, closest to the Sun, and its temperature reaches 400 degrees during the day, dropping to minus 180 at night. And how many degrees is it in your home right now?

„Depends which home you are asking about," Musalenko replied. „I feel at home when I visit any of my friends' places :). For example, it was hottest at my friend's house in Egypt. Still, those unforgettable 45 degrees in the Sahara Desert are far from 400 degrees... So, which is the next planet?"

„**Venus**," replied Saturn. „It's also called Sister Planet of the Earth.





Usually, at sunrise and sunset, it's the brightest celestial body after the Moon and the Sun. That's why sometimes it's considered a star and is also known as the Morning Star or the Evening Star."

Fasten your seatbelts because our next stop is your home – planet **Earth!**

I can talk about it for at least one Earth year... which in most cases is 365 days. Earth is the third planet; it has a natural satellite – the Moon – and it is the only planet in the Solar System with liquid water. Scientists believe that the Earth was formed about 4.54 billion years ago. Water covers more than half of its surface, precisely 71%, and that's why it's called the Blue Planet.

„Do you know that the Moon, when it's full and round, resembles a human face? :)“ Musalenko suddenly added.

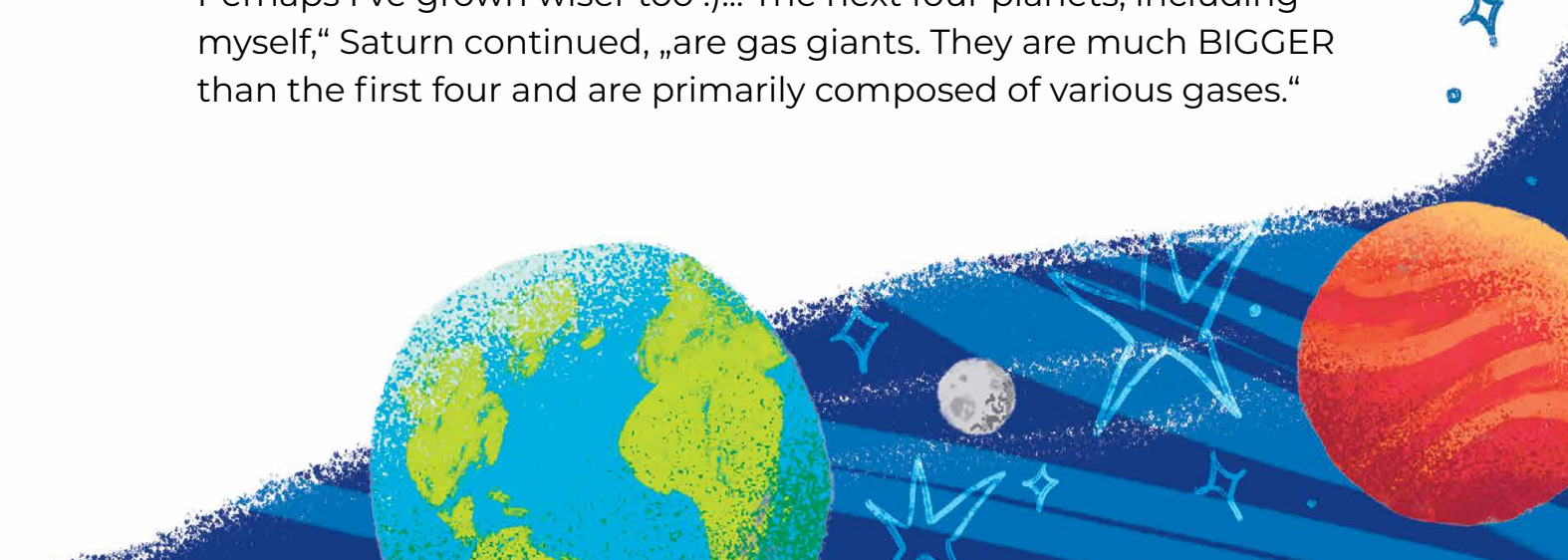

„Tell us about the next planet, Saturn. About the fourth one that you said looks like the Earth,“ impatiently said Mur, while trying to scratch something resembling a stone nearby with his claws.

Saturn adjusted his glasses and continued:

„Next we have **Mars** – the best-explored planet by humans. Various robotic rovers have landed and roamed on its surface. Due to its color, caused by swirling dust in the atmosphere, it's called the Red Planet.“

„Are there Martians or other extraterrestrial beings in Space?“ Musalenko suddenly asked again.

„The Great Book doesn't have an answer to that question yet,“ replied Saturn. „Some believe there are. Others believe there aren't. Whether there are extraterrestrial beings or not doesn't matter at the moment. In 865,000 years, it might be different, who knows... Perhaps I've grown wiser too :)... The next four planets, including myself,“ Saturn continued, „are gas giants. They are much BIGGER than the first four and are primarily composed of various gases.“





## IV. The Giants

Saturn took in a tremendous amount of air and decided he would talk about the giant planets in one single breath.

„The fifth planet, **Jupiter**, is 11 times larger than Earth and is the largest planet in the Solar System. It's also the most colorful planet. Turbulent winds mix its poisonous clouds, forming different colors and patterns. It's as if someone is constantly blending a multitude of colorful paints.

Next is **Saturn**!

We're already acquainted but let me tell you a bit more about myself. I am known for the multitude of rings that surround me, and I am the second-largest planet in the Solar System. If you look at me from afar, the rings around me resemble solid hoops, but in reality, they are pieces of rock, ice, and cosmic dust revolving around me.

Suddenly, Saturn spun around Musalenko and Mur and said:

„Quick question - just to see if you're paying attention: How many planets are there in the Solar System?“

„It depends. According to some scientists there are 8; according to others - 9,“ Musalenko replied. „Quick question for you, Saturn: Where are Saturn's holes located?“

„They don't exist. Sometimes, for no particular reason, a person, as they grow older, goes through a melancholic period. Adults call this period a ‚Saturn hole.‘ I would call it ‚go outside for a walk, look at the world around you, the sky, the stars, the sun... and it will pass,“ Saturn replied with a smile. „And now, let's continue with the last planets.

These are **Uranus** and **Neptune**.

They are quite similar – some researchers call them ice giants.

Neptune has the strongest winds in the Solar System, reaching






speeds of up to 2100 km/h. For comparison, on Earth, destructive hurricane winds can reach almost 400 km/h, and the strongest wind ever recorded was near Australia – 408 km/h.“

Musalenko and Mur looked around – it was their first time in Space. It was impressive, especially seeing their own planet from a distance, as if on a large screen or a gigantic photograph.

„And finally, meet **Pluto**,“ said Saturn, „which scientists don’t exactly consider a planet, but a dwarf planet. It’s very small, far away from the Sun, and it’s not composed of either gas, rocks, or metals but is more like an icy ball.“

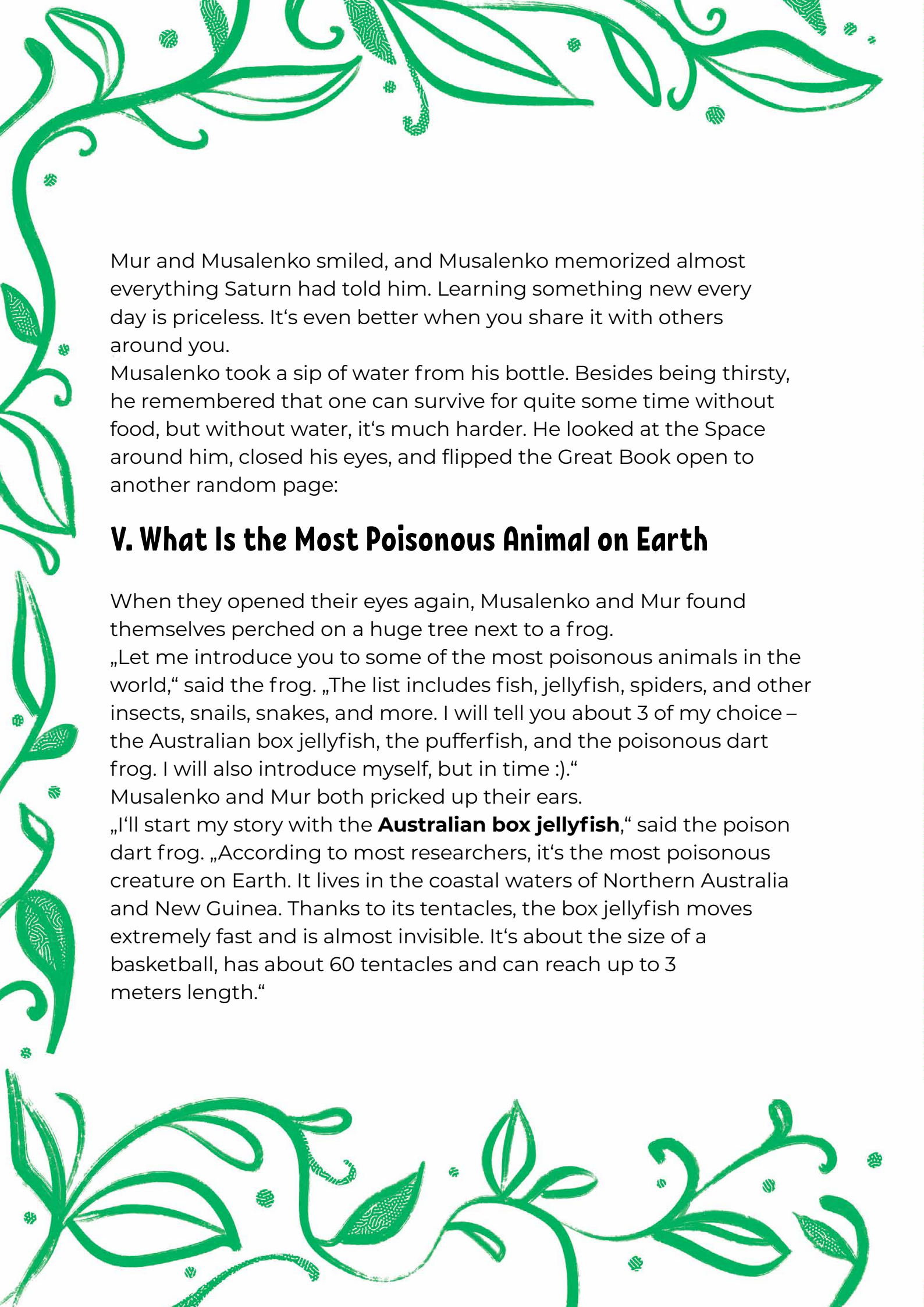
Saturn fell mysteriously silent, smiled, twirled his rings, and said solemnly:

„Welcome to the big family of the Great Book of Knowledge and gooooooodye now. Where you will go next and whom you will meet is up to you. Think about what new things you want to learn, and the entire Universe will help you.“ Saturn waved graciously at our friends to say goodbye, twirled his rings once more, and went back to spin around the Sun again. Not a simple task though, because unlike the Earth, Saturn takes about 10,759 Earth days (or about 29½ years) to make one full orbit around the Sun.



**And do you remember how many days the Earth takes to complete one orbit around the Sun?**





Mur and Musalenko smiled, and Musalenko memorized almost everything Saturn had told him. Learning something new every day is priceless. It's even better when you share it with others around you.

Musalenko took a sip of water from his bottle. Besides being thirsty, he remembered that one can survive for quite some time without food, but without water, it's much harder. He looked at the Space around him, closed his eyes, and flipped the Great Book open to another random page:

## V. What Is the Most Poisonous Animal on Earth


When they opened their eyes again, Musalenko and Mur found themselves perched on a huge tree next to a frog.

„Let me introduce you to some of the most poisonous animals in the world,” said the frog. „The list includes fish, jellyfish, spiders, and other insects, snails, snakes, and more. I will tell you about 3 of my choice – the Australian box jellyfish, the pufferfish, and the poisonous dart frog. I will also introduce myself, but in time :).”

Musalenko and Mur both pricked up their ears.

„I'll start my story with the **Australian box jellyfish**,” said the poison dart frog. „According to most researchers, it's the most poisonous creature on Earth. It lives in the coastal waters of Northern Australia and New Guinea. Thanks to its tentacles, the box jellyfish moves extremely fast and is almost invisible. It's about the size of a basketball, has about 60 tentacles and can reach up to 3 meters length.”





Mur shrank back and shivered, and the frog moved on to the **pufferfish**.

Almost everyone knows this marine creature or has at least seen it in pictures.

Pufferfish can grow up to 90 cm and are named so because, in danger, they inflate their stomachs with water and take on a round shape to scare off predators. They have hidden spikes that come out when they puff up, making them spiky and too difficult to swallow for their attacker – usually a larger fish. Their skin and internal organs contain a toxin that is unpleasant and can be deadly for their enemies, as well as for humans. Pufferfish is considered a delicacy in Japan and Korea. It needs to be prepared by chefs with extensive training who are able to clean and cook this fish properly, so that not even a drop of its poison contaminates the prepared dish. Eating it is definitely risky.

„That sounds a bit scary,” said Musalenko.


„... or intriguing,” added the frog. „And now, let me introduce the **poison dart frog**.

These relatives of mine live in the tropical forests of Central and South America. They are called poison dart frogs because the local Native Americans used their poison to coat the tips of their arrows. Poison dart frogs are small, ranging in length from 1.2 to 6cm, most often 7-8 cm. They weigh about 2 grams, depending on the frog's size. Many representatives of this frog family are endangered and are not really that dangerous. But if you travel through the jungles, always follow the rule ‚Never handle colorful frogs,’ especially if they are brightly colored – yellow, green, blue, red...”





## VI. The Beginning of the Journey




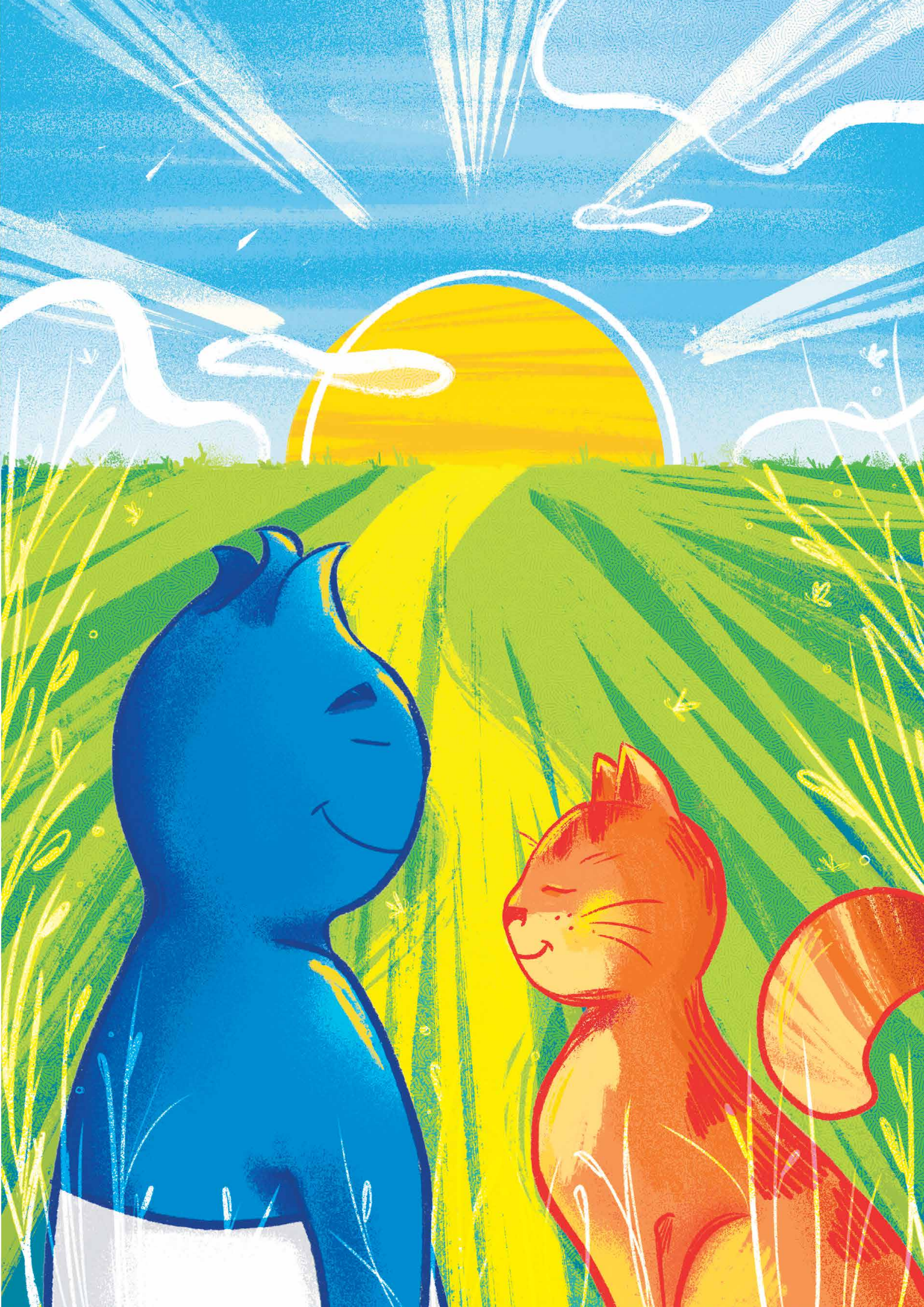
Musalenko and Mur had learned so many interesting things in such a short time, and Musalenko hadn't expected that this day, which had started out particularly dull, would bring him such a memorable adventure. On the other hand, he pondered, „I deserve to experience such amazing things because I am amazing myself.“ He considered for a moment being a bit more humble, but he realized that he truly did possess many virtues and values.

He always helped the younger ones and the elderly, said „Thank you“ and „Excuse me“ when appropriate, didn't lie... and a few other similar things. And aren't all those the qualities that make each of us amazing?

„Musalenko, you are actually at the start of your greatest adventure. You are now a part of the 'Great Book' family. Our knowledge and power of mind are boundless because we unite our superpowers to become bolder in our dreams, bigger in our hearts, and even better in our deeds :)“

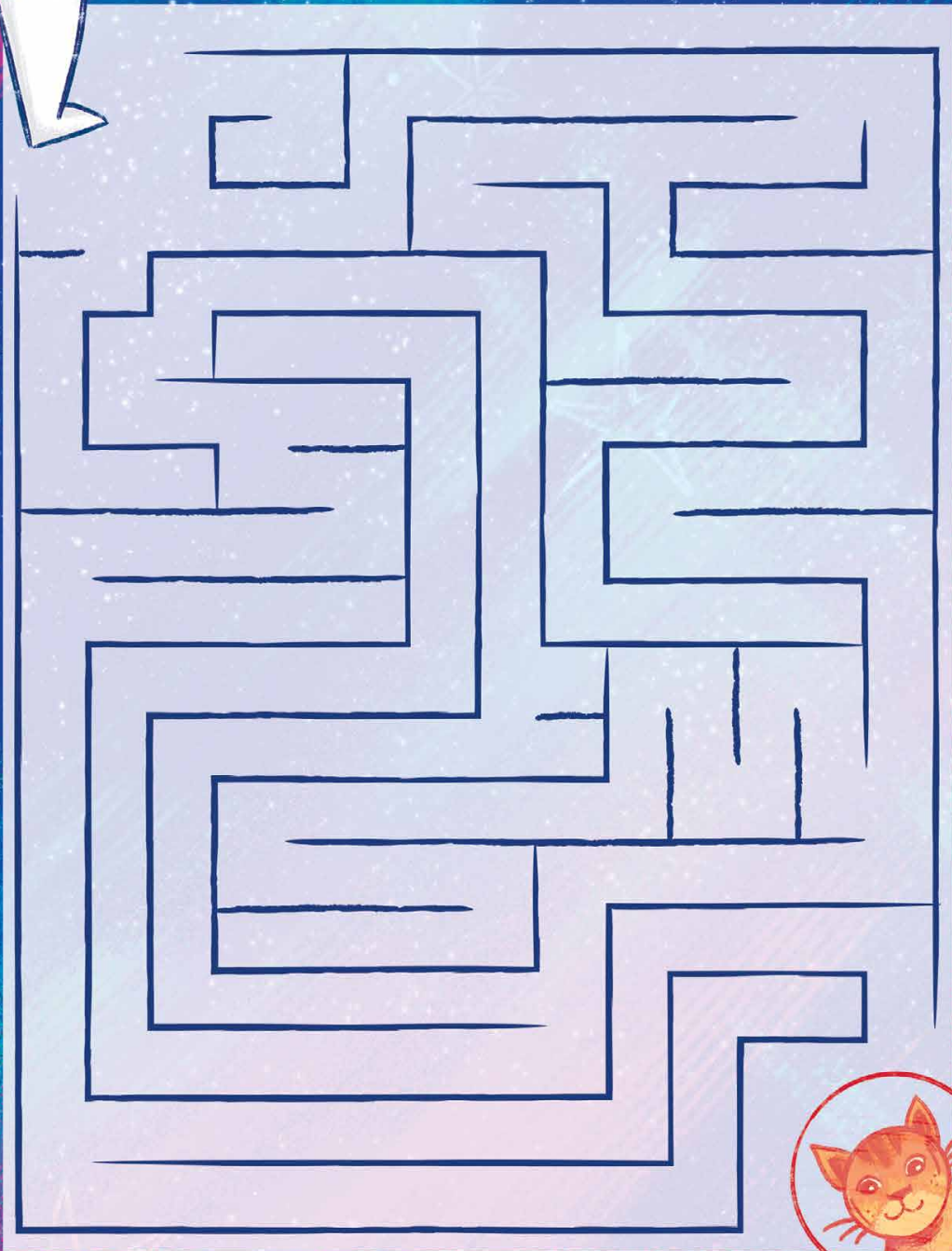
Musalenko thought about it – those were his exact words at the beginning of his journey. Perhaps everything happens for a reason...







**START**



**FINISH**







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Yavora Encheva - book design and illustrations, 2023

